DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 128 764 CS 002 927

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TITLE Commercially-Produced Skills Management Systems Based on the Diagnostic-Prescriptive Model; Modular Sequence: Diagnostic-Prescriptive Teaching of Reading.
INSTITUTION Hartford Univ., West Hartford, Conn. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 14p.; Teacher Corps Cycle X Project

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Diagnostic Teaching; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation; *Instructional Aids; *Instructional Materials; *Reading Instruction; Reading Materials; *Reading Skills; *Systems Approach; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

This learning guide helps teachers to understand the typical steps used in the construction of commercially produced, educational skills-management systems; to describe a representative set of such materials in the field of reading (the Wisconsin Design for Reading, the SRA "Diagnosis: An Instructional Aid," the Croft Word Attack and Comprehension System, the SARI kit, and Power Reading); and to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of commercially produced diagnostic-prescriptive materials. (KS)

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TEACHER CORPS CYCLE X PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD
WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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MODULAR SEQUENCE: DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE TEACHING OF READING

TTP 4.4 COMMERCIALLY-PRODUCED SKILLS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS BASED ON THE DIAGNOSTIC-PRESCRIPTIVE MODEL

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CS 002 927

RATIONALE

The principles of diagnostic-prescriptive instruction have in recent years been adopted by several commercial publishing companies. These prepared programs, typically labelled skills management systems, combine the diagnostic-prescriptive approach with a management system; these programs provide objectives, tests, organizational suggestions and, in some cases, instructional activities. Since these programs are so comprehensive and control so many instructional decisions usually the domain of the classroom teacher, it is imperative that the teacher knows the bases of these programs and the advantages and disadvantages of the general approach.

OBJECTIVES

When you complete this learning guide, you will be able to:

1) explain the typical steps used in the construction of commercially-produced skills management systems.

2) describe a typical set of materials such as the Wisconsin Design for Reading, the SRA Diagnosis: An Instructional Aid, the Croft Word Attack and Comprehension System, SARI, or Power Reading.

3) discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the commercially-produced diagnostic-prescriptive materials.

PRE-ASSESSMENT

Before you begin this module, evaluate your strengths and weaknesses by completing the following assessment.

1) Explain the typical units of a skills management system.

   a)

   b)

   c)

   d)

2) Describe a set of commercially-produced skills management system materials. (Use the units in the above question as your organization pattern.)

3) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the commercially-produced skills management system materials.

Directions: If you feel confident of your knowledge, have your instructor score this test. If not, continue on the next page.

INTRODUCTION

The diagnostic teaching model can be totally teacher conducted and teacher controlled. The teacher can formulate a set of objectives for the classroom reading program, can use informal reading inventories and informal word attack tests to identify children's strengths and weaknesses, can select materials and implement instruction.

The teacher, on the other hand, also has the option of using a commercially-prepared diagnostic-prescriptive kit or plan. There is a strong movement in many schools today to adopt a commercially-prepared package known as a "management systems approach" to instruction. A management system, a model borrowed from the business world, is a pattern or series of systematic steps designed to insure that decisions and actions are based on carefully determined objects and assessments of needs.

The philosophy and process of the diagnostic-prescriptive teaching approach parallel those of the "system managements approach." In short, a systems approach to reading is a commercially-produced, standardized diagnostic-prescriptive approach.

Essentially <u>any</u> systems management approach--whether in reading, math or social studies and whether teacher- or publisher-made--contains the following units:

1) Outline of Skills and Objectives

2) Assessment Instruments

3) Instructional Resources

4) Management and Record-Keeping System

5) Evaluation of Students' Learning

Under such a system the student is learning only those ideas or skills he does not know; he can proceed at his own speed; he is in a planned continuous learning track. Grade levels are not significant measures in this approach; only what the student knows, doesn't know, and needs to learn next are important.

For the classroom teacher it provides many convenient tests and record-keeping procedures--but at the price of some loss of control over program objectives and personalized diagnostic situations. It is important for teachers, therefore, to carefully analyze the commercially-produced systems management approach to reading and its effect on instruction.

Important Terms in a Management System

1. Criterion-referenced test - a test which tells the teacher specific skills or ideas the student does and does not know. The criterion or standard against which the student is measured is the performance of the task rather than how another student scored.

2. Mastery learning - that level that the teacher, school, or program specify as adequate proof of knowledge or skill. Usually 80-90%.

3. Performance (or behavioral) objective - a statement of (a) the skill to be mastered, (b) the conditions for performing or demonstrating the skill and (c) the level of mastery required.

SUGGESTED LEARNING STRATEGIES

As you investigate systems management approaches, you need to look at the actual materials and tests provided in these commercially-produced programs. The following are suggested activities based on specific programs; if you in your system use another program, it will obviously be most valuable for you to study that system and compare it to one of the systems suggested here. If you do not use a systems approach, the Wisconsin Design material is probably the easiest to obtain. (See Activity 1.)

Select the activities that you need to meet the objectives of this module.

ACTIVITY 1

Study the NCS Educational Systems Specimen Set for the Wisconsin Design for Reading Skill Development. This is available free of charge from NCS Educational Systems, 4401 W. 76th Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55435. Follow these steps in your review of the materials:

1. Select the booklet entitled The Wisconsin Design Overview. Read pages 1-3. Pay particular attention to Figure 1 on page 2.

2. Read page 3, "The Wisconsin Tests" in the Overview and see sample tests on pages 8-13 of the Overview. Notice how each skill is measured and the directions given for each test.

3. Read page 4, "Skill Development Cards" in the Overview. Study the record-keeping cards in the packet. These are the record-keeping cards for the entire reading program and if you used each skill component of the system, you would have one of each of these cards for every student in your class.

4. Read page 4, "Teacher's Resource Files" in the Overview. Sample of a file is enclosed in the packet. Not all files are this extensive!

5. Complete reading the Overview. Notice the cost.

6. Check the colorful practice sheets included in the packet. These are not a part of the Management System. A management system provides an operating procedure, not materials or methods.

ACTIVITY 2

Study the SRA Diagnosis: An Instructional Aid. Follow these steps in your review of the materials:

1. Read the preface and rationale of the Teacher's Manual, Level A or B. Study the flowchart in figure 1.

2. Now read the section in the Manual describing the components of the kit.

3. Look over the survey test, form X and form Y. Find the section "Administering the Survey Test" in the Manual. Pretend you are the student; take Survey Test, form X (directions are in the manual); score your test. (It helps if you make some mistakes.)

4. Read in the manual "Administering the Probes." If you were the student, you would now be given the Probes based on your Survey Test. Assume you as a student need to take probe RA-26. Take this test yourself. Follow the directions for the student.

5. Tear the test along the perforated lines. Score your answers. See the pages in the Manual, "Scoring the Probes."

6. Notice the "learning objectives" on the progress record. These are the specific skills the student was tested on in this probe. If he missed numbers 8 to 12, he is weak in the third type of sequencing tested, sentences describing a story.

7. Read the pages "Using the Prescription Guide" in the Teacher's Manual. Find the sample pages from the prescription guide; these pages give Ginn 360 materials related to the learning objectives (Index Code 26-A, 26-B, 26-C) of Probe RA-26, Sequence.

8. Read "Suggested Uses of Diagnosis Kit in the Classroom," pages 5-7 in the Manual. You should now understand the terminology and procedures each of these suggested patterns is proposing.

ACTIVITY 3

Study any skills systems management approach that is used in your school or that is available for inspection. Your instructor can provide additional materials, if necessary. Follow these steps in your review of the materials:

1. Read the manual and study each section of the system as it is described.

2. Study the behavioral objectives. Are they significant in your reading program?

3. Take the survey test and sample criterion tests yourself. Do they test what the behavioral objectives intend? Are the questions reasonable? Would your students be able to follow the directions on the test?

4. Evaluate the suggestions for classroom organization of instruction. Is it clear? Is it viable?

5. Study any references for instructional materials. Are the materials suggested reasonable for your students? Are the materials available in your school?

ACTIVITY 4

Visit a classroom (or school) using a systems management approach. As you observe, make sure you see all phases of the system in operation. Check the efficiency of the record-keeping system.

ACTIVITY 5

Interview a teacher using a commercially-produced systems management approach. Ask questions about each phase of the system and about the advantages and disadvantages of the system.

ACTIVITY 6

View the filmstrip/tape presentations Objective-Based Reading Instruction, Assessing Children's Reading Skills, and Managing Objective-Based Reading Instruction.

ACTIVITY 7

Read the article, "Objective-Based Reading Systems: An Evaluation," by Rude in The Reading Teacher, November 1974, pp. 169-175. (This article reviews the major objective-based reading programs on the market: Croft, Fountain Valley, Prescriptive Reading Inventory, Read On, and the Wisconsin Design.)

ACTIVITY 8

Read the article, "Skills Management Systems: A Critique," by Johnson and Pearson in The Reading Teacher, May 1975, pp. 757-764. (This article evaluates the concept of skills management systems; it gives pros and cons.)

ACTIVITY 9

Read the article, "What Could Be Bad? Some Reflections on the Accountability Movement," by Brown in the English Journal, March 1973, pp. 461-463.

POST-ASSESSMENT

Complete the following questions:

1) Explain the typical units of the skills management system.

2) Describe a set of commercially-produced skills management system materials.

3) Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the commercially-produced skills management system materials.

Directions: Have your instructor score your test.